



# Severe Weather Bulletin

Iowa Department of Administrative Services

April 2009

## April 6-10 is Severe Weather Awareness Week

Iowa and wacky weather are pretty much the same. Winter? Too cold. Summer? Too muggy. Spring and fall? A lot of times, simply too short. Nevertheless, even though Iowans are accustomed to unusual weather, too few of us have a plan to follow when severe weather strikes. And, with the incidence of tornados and severe thunder storms soon to rise, putting together a plan is a great idea. Here are some tips from the National Weather Service.

### **Meet with your family to develop a plan**

- Pick two rendezvous places - one in the neighborhood in case of a fire and one out of the neighborhood in case it's not possible to return home.
- Choose an out-of-state friend for everyone in your family to contact to report they're okay in case your family gets separated.
- Figure out what the family will do in case of a widespread evacuation.



### **Implement your plan**

- Post emergency telephone numbers by your phones
- Install and upkeep smoke detectors and fire extinguishers
  - Inspect for hazards (things that might fall or cause injury) and repair
  - Learn basic safety measures such as CPR and first aid
  - Teach children how and when to call 911
  - Keep supplies stocked, including blankets, water - anything you might need if evacuation is required.

### **Practice and maintain your plan**

It's all about communications and thinking ahead. Whether you choose to conduct drills or simply talk about the plan, make sure you don't run the risk of confusion or panic.

For more information on putting together a plan for your family, go to [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).

## Flood Safety Awareness Week: March 16-20

*By Jeff Zogg, Senior Service Hydrologist, National Weather Service. This article originally appeared in the Spring 2009 issue of The Weather Whisper, which is distributed by the Des Moines office of the National Weather Service.*

Many people in Iowa personally witnessed or experienced the dangers of flooding during last year's historic floods. Flooding is the #2 storm-related killer in the United States, second only to lightning. Flooding kills more people each year than tornadoes and winter storms. On average, each year floods kill more than 100 people and are responsible for \$5.3 billion in damage. Flooding also takes many different forms, from river flooding to flash flooding to snowmelt flooding. It occurs in any month of the year and any time of day.

But, flooding typically doesn't happen very often. That's why it's important to know how to find important information, how to prepare for potential flooding, where to obtain flood insurance if it is required in your area and to know general safety tips to help keep you, your family and your property as safe as possible.



# Statewide Tornado Drill April 8

Of course, real tornadoes don't give you much of a timetable with which to prepare, but the drill scheduled for Wednesday, April 8 will at least give you the opportunity to know where to go if a tornado is truly heading toward your workplace.

Designated shelter areas are typically in the basement or below-grade floors.

Stay away from windows. If you aren't sure where to go for a tornado drill, ask your supervisor.

⇒ At 10 a.m., a **Tornado Watch** (drill) will be issued throughout the Capitol Complex. No sheltering is required with a Watch.

⇒ Then, at 10:15 a.m., a **Tornado Warning**

(drill) will be issued. Everyone should proceed to designated shelters immediately.

⇒ At 10:30 a.m., the **Clear** (drill) will be issued, allowing everyone to return to their work stations.

If there is actual severe weather April 8, the drills will be postponed to April 9.

## DAS CONTACT

*Get the facts and learn more!*

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### **What To Listen For:**

#### **TORNADO WATCH:**

Tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms.

**TORNADO WARNING:** A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. If a tornado warning is issued for your area and the sky becomes threatening, move to your pre-designated place of safety.

**SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WATCH:** Severe thunderstorms are possible in your area.

**SEVERE THUNDERSTORM WARNING:** Severe thunderstorms are occurring.

## Flood Safety Awareness Week

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This year will mark the fourth annual NWS Flood Safety Awareness Week. For each day during the week, a different flooding-related topic will be highlighted. We invite you to read about each of the below topics on the National Flood Safety Awareness Week website at <http://www.floodsafety.noaa.gov/>.

**Monday: Advanced Hydrologic Prediction System (AHPS).** AHPS provides long-range river forecasts in addition to the five-day river forecasts you have always seen. These long-range forecasts give an indication of the risk of flooding over a three-month period. Although the AHPS forecasts are available on both our web site and in text format over the weather wire, our web site provides more detailed information.

**Tuesday: Turn Around Don't Drown (TADD).** Do you know that more than half of all flood-related deaths are drownings that result from vehicles caught in flood waters and then swept downstream? People often underestimate the force of water. Most vehicles lose contact with the road in six inches of water and can be swept away in 18 to 24 inches of water.

**Wednesday: Floods, droughts and other related phenomena.** A variety of flooding and related phenomena threaten life and property in all 50 states and territories throughout the entire year. Some of the flooding types in our area include flash flooding, river flooding and overland flooding which result from heavy rain, snow melt and ice jams.

**Thursday: Flood insurance.** Do you know that flood losses are typically not covered in homeowners' insurance policies? Nearly everyone is at risk of experiencing damage from flooding. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), everyone lives in a flood zone. It's just a question of whether you live in a low, moderate or high risk area. Flood insurance is available, however, to help you insure your property against flood losses.

**Friday: Flood safety.** If you know what to do before, during and after a flood you can increase your chances of surviving a flood. We at the NWS cooperate with our partners to inform you how to become aware of the flood risks in your area and then react properly when a flood threatens you.